

# Teaching the Skills Students Need to Be Employable

## [Spotlight for Career Services Professionals](#)

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The career services office at Bridgewater State University (BSU) has made teaching students the skills that employers value in their employees the foundation of its programming.

Instead of assuming what skills college students need to have or develop to be employable, the staff of the career services office asked BSU faculty and staff, and the employers that recruit BSU students to identify these key skills.

They responded with 28, among them:

- Advocacy skills
- Computer skills
- Financial knowledge and skills
- Negotiation skills
- Professional writing skills
- Social media professionalism

"Based on what employers told us and our belief that students need these skills to be successful in the work force, we changed our mission to embed the development of these skills into our programming," explains Carol Crosby, assistant director of the career services office.

"We moved from randomly developing workshops and materials to being very intentional in what we offer so our students are always learning and practicing skills."

Crosby and the office's counseling staff met every month over two years to review the skills and determine the best ways to incorporate them into the career services office's in-person and online programs, workshops, and resources. They also developed a way to show how effective the new programming is.

"We created assessment instruments that ensure students are learning the skills we're teaching," Crosby says. "We tend to have a success rate of skill development that's between 88 and 100 percent. If the evaluations come back with any skill development below 88 percent, my staff and I will go back and revamp the weak section of the workshop so it accomplishes our goal."

One of the keys to the success of BSU's shift in programming is that the career service office staff, themselves, were willing to learn about what others saw as the key skills students need to be employable.

"This initiative has worked, in part, because we have involved our community—students, employers, faculty, the counseling staff—from the start," Crosby says. "Everybody is invested in it."

[Carol Crosby will present "Are Students Learning Professional Skills? Teaching Students to Be Employable" as a concurrent session during the NACE 2015 Conference.](#)